DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 400 442 CE 072 807

AUTHOR	Grubb, W. Norton
TITLE	Creating Coherent Workforce Preparation Systems from the Quagmire of Education and Job Training.
INSTITUTION	National Center for Research in Vocational Education, Berkeley, CA.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Vocational and Adult Education (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	96
NOTE	7p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research/Technical (143)
JOURNAL CIT	Centerfocus; n13 Fall 1996
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Adult Education; *Cooperative Programs; Coordination; Economically Disadvantaged; Educational Cooperation; Educational Legislation; Federal Aid; Federal Legislation; *Federal Programs; *Job Training; *State Programs; Vocational Education
IDENTIFIERS	Job Training Partnership Act 1982

ABSTRACT

If Congress passes legislation consolidating federal funding for vocational education, job training, and adult education, states will be free to combine federal funding with state programs to create more coherent and effective systems. If such legislation is stalled, states have the power to reform the patchwork that now exists, but doing so requires a vision of such a system. The continued proliferation of separate training and education programs has created concern about waste and duplication. A second, more serious consequence involves small effects from small programs. Another problem is the basic assumption underlying most job training programs--that job finding is the basic problem. Most job training programs are also completely ignorant about good teaching. The separation of training from adult education has been counter-productive. One way to develop a more effective education and job training system would be to recombine now-separate programs--to link job training with educational programs systematically. A coherent system does the following: arrays programs in a progression or ladder of increasing sophistication and skill; links existing job training efforts to the education system, with community colleges as the linchpin between the two; and proposes that adult education provide the academic or remedial instruction complementary to occupational training. This vision can build on principles that have already been articulated in the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994. (YLB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

NCRVE
National Center for Research in Vocational Education
University of California at Berkeley

Number 13/Fall 1996

centerfocus

ED 400 442

eating Coherent Workforce Preparation Systems From the Quagmire of ducation and Job Training

Americans are great systems build-

Throughout the nineteenth century into the twentieth, reformers tried to develop systemic approaches to social and economic policy, creating transportation systems, a justice system, a social security system for the elderly, and a tax system. So too in education: the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were periods of creating an educational system progressing from kindergarten, through a sequence of grades with each a prerequisite for the next, and on to higher education.

A different set of job-related programs has developed since the early 1960s—one constructed apart from the schooling system. This process began with manpower programs during the 1960s, consolidated in the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) during the 1970s and reformed in the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) during the 1980s. Job training is also provided through the welfare system, to allow AFDC recipients to leave welfare. Other special-purpose efforts have proliferated, including those for dislocated workers who become unemployed as a result of economic changes beyond their control, like the decline of defense industries or foreign competition. Still another part of the current "system" is publicly funded adult education, which furnishes a patchwork of remedial education, English as a Second Language (ESL), and miscellaneous other subjects, provided in a bewildering array of institutions.

The establishment of job training and adult education manifests one of the most generous American impulses: to create educational and economic opportunities for as many people as possible, in this case through "second chance" programs. However, the creation of these programs has led to special difficulties, particularly those of cohesiveness and effectiveness—and therefore to periodic efforts to reform the system.

The current deliberations in Congress about consolidating federal funding for vocational education, job training, and adult education provides the latest example of such reforms, and one which presents a rare opportunity for states. If Congress manages to pass such legislation, then states will be freed from federal restrictions and able to combine federal funding with their state programs to create more coherent and effective systems. Even if such legislation is stalled, states still have the power to reform the patchwork that now exists. But doing so requires a vision of such a system. In this *CenterFocus*, I present a vision in which programs are arrayed in a progression or "ladder" of increasing sophistication and skill; existing job training efforts are linked to the education system, with community colleges as the linchpin between the two, and adult education providing the academic or remedial instruction complementary to occupational training. This vision can, fortunately, build on principles that have already been articulated in the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994.

Diagnosing the Problem: The Separation of Job Training From Education

Over the past 30 years, a distinction has emerged between *education* and *job training*. Job training programs are generally much shorter than educational programs, perhaps 10 to 15 weeks long. In addition, they are open only to those who are eligible—for example, to the long-term unemployed or dislocated workers in JTPA, or to welfare recipients—rather than being open to all. While this practice focuses resources on those who most need help, job training programs concentrate individuals who have been unemployed and on welfare; this has created a powerful stigma so that many employers refuse to hire from these programs.

In contrast to the provision of education in familiar institutions, job training services are offered in a bewildering variety of educational institutions, community-based organizations (CBOs), firms, unions, and proprietary schools, making it difficult to determine how services are organized and provided. Job training programs also offer a much greater variety of services than education, including classroom instruction in both basic (or remedial) academic subjects and vocational skills; on-the-job training; work experience; and job search assistance. Job training also supports placement efforts more often, while educators are more likely to declare that they are responsible for "education, not employment." Finally, the goals of education programs generally encompass political, moral, and intellectual purposes as well as occupational ends; but job training focuses exclusively on preparing individuals to become employed.

The separation of job training from education has been unfortunate in several respects. One is that the continued proliferation of separate training and education programs has created the sense of having too many efforts all doing the same thing, leading to concerns with waste and duplication. The proliferation of programs also creates confusion about what is available. According to the General Accounting Office, in 1995 more than 160 distinct federal programs supported education and job training at a cost of $20.4 billion, and many states have initiated their own training. This creates confusion among employers, potential clients, and policy-

CE017 807

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

makers alike. As *America's Choice: High Skills or Lower Wages!* (1990) described the problem,

The network of public training activities in the country has thus been created as a result of unrelated education, social, and economic development goals rather than from any overall vision of human resource development...The result is a crazy quilt of competing and overlapping policies and programs, with no coherent system of standardization or information exchange service on which various providers and agencies can rely.

A second and ultimately more serious consequence of the separation of job training from education involves effectiveness. To be sure, most job training programs do increase employment and earnings, and reduce the amount of welfare benefits individuals receive; except for the least effective programs, the benefits of job training usually exceed the costs, so they are "worth doing" in this sense. However, the benefits are too small to change the lives of individuals enrolled in them. On the average, programs increase earnings by about $200 to $500 per year, too little to move individuals out of poverty or off welfare. And even these meager benefits begin to decline about four years after enrolling; after five years there is typically no difference between those who have enrolled in job training and individuals who have not. Even in JTPA, which is thought to be outcome-oriented because of its performance standards, local programs tend to "play to the indicators," concerned with meeting specific performance targets, but indifferent to other dimensions of success—for example, long-term employment. The result is that the official performance measures are uncorrelated with the true effects on earnings.

Many reasons for these weak results can be traced to the original separation of education from job training. A dominant reason is simply that small programs have small effects. The individuals enrolled in job training often have multiple problems and several barriers to employment: they often lack job-specific skills, general academic skills, and the kinds of values (including motivation, punctuality, the ability to work with others) necessary to find and keep employment; some of them have more serious problems like drug and alcohol abuse, physical handicaps, other health problems, depression and mental health problems. But most job training programs are "small" in the sense that they last a very short period of time, rarely more than twenty weeks; and they often provide a single kind of service rather than a variety of complementary services for individuals with multiple needs. As an indicator of their intensity, job training programs cost much less—in the vicinity of $2,200 per person—than do community college programs, whose cost per person averaged $5,700 in 1993. Job training administrators often take pride in this: they sometimes say, for example, that they offer "Chevrolet" programs compared to the "Cadillacs" of educational institutions. But this attitude masks a profound disjunction between the needs of their clients and the short duration and limited services they provide.

A related problem, given the multiple barriers to employment of many individuals, is that job training programs typically provide "one shot" efforts. A particular program is not usually linked to any other programs, either those with complementary services (like remediation) or those with more advanced training. There are very few mechanisms following individuals through the "system," helping them make transitions among programs, providing them with assistance if they falter, or giving them information about the alternatives available. In most communities, what could be a well articulated system with a continuum of remedial and job-specific education is instead a patchwork of disconnected pieces.

Another problem caused by the separation of training from education is the basic assumption underlying most job training programs, which have stressed moving individuals into employment. But this tactic assumes that *job finding* is the basic problem, and that once individuals get jobs they will remain employed. In contrast to education programs, there has been much less attention to enhancing basic competencies—cognitive, vocational, and personal—that might allow individuals to keep their jobs over the long run and to advance. It should not be surprising that the long-run effects of job training programs are so paltry: they can urge individuals to be employed more, but they do not prepare them for skilled and better-paid occupations.

In addition, most job training programs are completely ignorant about good teaching. Job training programs almost universally use conventional pedagogical techniques based on "skills and drills," with instructors drilling endlessly on a series of inherently meaningless sub-skills. This approach is likely to be particularly ineffective for the individuals in job training, most of whom have not done well in school; why they should suddenly be able to learn from conventional instruction in short programs with bad teaching is unclear.

My diagnosis, then, is that the separation of *training* from *education* has been counter-productive. The real economic rewards are to be found in the educational system, not in job training, since the benefits of postsecondary certificates and Associate degrees are under the right conditions much more substantial than those from job training. But the separation has also worked to the detriment of the educa-

tion system too, which could learn from job training about the importance of performance and outcomes rather than enrollments as a measure of success, and about the value of placement and related support services.

My diagnosis of the problems with adult education is similar (Grubb and Kalman, 1994). While the variety of adult education is bewildering and makes generalization difficult, most are independent of occupational education and training, so the possibilities for teaching academic competencies in the context of work is lost. Their instructors are part-time and poorly trained, and the teaching methods in the vast majority are the didactic, teacher-centered, behaviorist approach I call "skills and drills"—an approach contrary to most principles of good practice in adult education. Even when education and training programs send their clients to adult education for remedial purposes, there are no mechanisms of following them to see whether they complete adult education and make it back into job skills training; one JOBS administrator lamented sending clients to "the black hole of adult basic education." The progress of most individuals in adult education is meager; as one long-time observer described it (Diekhoff, 1988, p. 629):

Adult literacy programs have failed to produce life-changing improvements in reading ability that are often suggested by published evaluations of these programs. It is true that a handful of adults do make substantial meaningful improvements, but the average participant gains only one or two reading grade levels and is still functionally illiterate by almost any standard when he or she leaves training.

Thus, the separation of adult education from other forms of education and training has impoverished it in every way, much as has happened to job training.

A Different Vision: Vertical Articulation and "Ladders" of Opportunities

One way to develop a more effective education and job training system would be to recombine now-separate programs—to link job training with educational programs (including adult education) systematically. In developing this vision, the recently-enacted School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994 (STWOA) articulates the principles that could guide state efforts. While the STWOA was intended to reform high schools, it can be interpreted as specifying five elements for successful workforce programs at any level:

- Vocational skill training, of varying length to prepare individuals for jobs of different levels of skill, responsibility, earnings, and stability.
- Academic instruction, integrated with occupational education. In job training programs, this could refer to remedial instruction, which proves to be necessary for many individuals.
- The inclusion of work-based education, coordinated with classroom-based instruction through "connecting activities." Work-based learning provides a different kind of learning, complementary with classroom instruction.
- The connection of every program to the next program in a hierarchy of education and training opportunities. In the STWOA, high school programs are explicitly linked to postsecondary opportunities through tech prep. The analogy in job training programs is that every program should be connected to a further program at a higher skill level.
- The use of applied teaching methods and team-teaching strategies. By implication, all school-based and work-based instruction should incorporate pedagogies that are more contextualized, more integrated, student-centered, active (or constructivist), and project- or activity-based.

Currently, of course, most education and job training programs violate these principles. The overall task of developing a more coherent and integrated program of education and job training is substantial, and I can only outline the elements that would be necessary. However, if the central vision of the School-to-Work Opportunities Act is kept in mind, then the elements necessary to realize this vision can be developed over time.

A coherent "system" would require all programs to be linked, to create a series of sequential education and training activities that individuals can use to progress from relatively low levels of skill (and relatively unskilled and poorly-paid work) to higher levels of skill and more demanding, better-paid occupations. For example, individuals with no occupational skills and little experience could enter short-term job training programs, of the kind now provided by JTPA and welfare-to-work programs, that would provide 15 to 30 weeks of instruction preparing them for modestly-skilled entry-level jobs. They could then *either* leave for employment, helped by appropriate placement services; *or* they could enter a subsequent job training program, presumably a certificate program leading to more skilled jobs. Individuals needing to support themselves immediately would go into employment, but they would be able to re-enter the system when the conditions of their lives permit, and continue up the ladder of opportunities. The linkages among programs would be occupationally specific; for example, a community-based organization or a vocational school could offer a fifteen week electronics program providing access to relatively unskilled assembly-line employment; after working for awhile, an individual could continue in a certificate program in electronics in a community college.

In turn, certificate programs would prepare individuals for employment *or*

NCRVE

National Center for Research in
Vocational Education
University of California at Berkeley

2150 Shattuck Ave., Suite 1250,
Berkeley, CA 94704-1058

NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 1
BERKELEY, CA

This publication was published pursuant to a grant from the Office of Vocational and Adult Education, U.S. Department of Education, authorized by the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act

for subsequent continuation in an Associate degree program, depending once again on the life circumstances of individual students. In turn, Associate programs are usually connected to baccalaureate programs, through articulation agreements and transfer centers that are part of many community colleges. In this vision, the lower levels of job training could be provided in institutions outside of education—in community-based organizations, unions, and firms—as well as in area vocational schools and two-year colleges; but most certificate and Associate-level occupational instruction would take place in community colleges and technical institutes. In this way, two-year colleges would become the point of connection between what is now the job training system and the educational system.

One requirement for creating such a "ladder" is that every job training program in a community would be required to specify those programs to which it leads, and those lower-level programs which are "feeders" into the program. This would provide information to students about the appropriate sequence of programs. In addition, the process of developing agreements among different providers would require collaboration in the design and delivery of education and training—not merely cooperation in providing information to one another. This in turn requires individual providers to view themselves as parts of a system, and viewing their mission *both* as preparing individuals for employment *and* as preparing individuals for continued education and training.

Creating such vertical ladders would require the kinds of articulation mechanisms that now exist between some community colleges and four-year colleges, or that are created in tech-prep programs—intended to smooth the transition from one institution to another. Mechanisms of tracking individuals over time would make sure they do not become "lost" in the system and that they have access to the information they need to continue. Such tracking mechanisms are similar to the caseworker function in welfare programs, and to the student tracking systems devised by some community colleges to provide counseling and guidance to students who fall behind their stated career goals.

A system of credentials would make the functioning of this vertical system easier. If vocational education and job training programs are vertically sequenced, then it is necessary to know that an individual has mastered certain competencies before progressing to more advanced education. This could be done through existing education credentials. Alternatively, this could be done through the development of occupation-specific skill standards, created with the participation of employers. However, the process of developing credentials is horrendously complex and involves many pitfalls—for example, standard multiple choice tests often lead to the worst "skills and drills" teaching methods—so that the benefits of skill standards must be weighed against the costs.

There are several reasons for emphasizing vertical integration and "ladders" of carefully sequenced education and training programs:

- This vision can build on existing programs, linking and improving them rather than creating new programs that are unlikely to be funded.
- The individuals within the education and training system who are in the greatest need require a number of different competencies including basic language and mathematical skills; job-specific skills; and personal attributes like motivation, discipline, and persistence. It is difficult to integrate them into the economic mainstream except in small steps, providing support (via welfare, training subsidies, or unskilled work) in the interim.
- Many of those in need of education and training need to work while they are enrolled. Since they cannot afford to stop working for one to four years, they need to accumulate small amounts of education and training, work a while, and return to school (probably part-time) to further improve their skills.
- Existing programs are hierarchically arranged anyway—this is one reason that there is not that much duplication. Individuals on AFDC are typically less well-prepared and experienced than those in JTPA, who in turn are less well-prepared than the typical community college student. In job training, area vocational schools and JTPA programs provide shorter and less sophisticated programs than community colleges. In literacy and remediation, community-based volunteer programs enroll those who are completely non-literate, while adult ed programs typically start at the 4th or 5th grade-level equivalent and lead to a GED, and community college programs aim to prepare individuals for college-level English courses. As long as there are hierarchies in existing programs, it makes sense to take advantage of them.
- Even where communities provide a range of services, the pathways through them are unclear. Furthermore, eligibility standards are inconsistent, assessment procedures are varied, and the content of programs is uncoordinated—and so in practice the range of education and services provided is not a smooth continuum.
- Currently there are few mechanisms for revealing low quality in the "system." If programs are linked vertically, and a receiving program finds preparation in the sending program to be inadequate, there is a new incentive for blowing the whistle on ineffective programs.

There are, then, many advantages to linking the existing systems of vocational

education and job training. The advantage is not primarily that of eliminating waste and duplication, since there is very little of that. Instead, a unified system has the possibility of being more effective—particularly for the individuals who find themselves in short-term job training programs with small and short-lived payoffs.

The system of vertically coordinated programs involves many detailed changes, many of which must be worked out at the local level. For example, such a system will require a state agency to oversee its development; a local or regional council to monitor local changes; incentives for vertical coordination, and disincentives to programs maintaining their independence from others; information systems and "case managers" to track individuals through the system so they do not become "lost"; and decisions about abolishing programs that are inconsistent with the central vision. Despite the magnitude of these changes, a vision of vertical integration provides a goal that is more appropriate to the needs of many individuals, and can create a coherent and effective system of education and job training from the quagmire that now exists.

— W. Norton Grubb
NCRVE Berkeley Site Director
Professor of Education
University of California, Berkeley

This *CenterFocus* draws in part on Grubb (1996a) and (1996b), which summarize a great deal of research supported by the National Center for Research in Vocational Education, School of Education, University of California, Berkeley.

References

Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce. (1990). *America's choice: High skills or low wages!* Rochester, NY: National Center on Education and the Economy.

Dickhoff, G. M. (1988, April). An appraisal of adult literacy programs: Reading between the lines. *Journal of Reading, 31*(7) 624-630.

Grubb, W. N. (1996a). *Learning to work: The case for re-integrating education and job training.* New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Grubb, W. N. (1996b). *Working in the middle: Strengthening education and training for the mid-skilled labor force.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Grubb, W. N., & Kalman, J. (1994, November). Relearning to earn: The role of remediation in vocational education and job training. *American Journal of Education, 103*(1) 54-93.

This publication was published pursuant to a grant from the Office of Vocational and Adult Education, U.S. Department of Education, authorized by the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act.

CENTERFOCUS
National Center for Research in Vocational Education,
University of California at Berkeley

Address all comments, questions, and requests for additional copies to:

NCRVE
2150 Shattuck Ave., Suite 1250
Berkeley, CA 94704-1058

Our toll-free number is
800-762-4093